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OF
MR. R. W. THOMPSON, OF INDIANA,
ON THE REFERENCE OF
THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL MESSAGE.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED
STATES, JANUARY 27, 1848.

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The House being in Committee of the Whole, and having under consideration the Annual Message of the President of the United States, and the resolutions referring it to appropriate Committees,

MR. R. W. THOMPSON, of Indiana, addressed the Committee as follows :

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

I do not know that I should have felt myself at all called upon to address the Committee upon the several subjects towards which its attention has been directed for the last week or ten days, if it were not that I feel a kind of necessity for doing what I have never before done in my life—that is, to define my position. About four weeks ago I was represented by a newspaper in New York as having made a speech of some hour's length upon this floor, advocating the entire conquest and subjugation of Mexico. On the day before yesterday I was represented by the "Union" of this city as having made another speech, justifying the entire course of policy pursued by the present Administration in the origin, prosecution, and objects of the war with Mexico. For fear, therefore, that somebody should suppose I might possibly have made a speech of this kind, I deem it expedient to take this opportunity to declare what are the sentiments I really entertain upon this question; and I think I shall convince gentlemen, before I get through, that I have neither made the one nor the other of those speeches.

My chief purpose in now rising is to notice several of the positions taken by gentlemen upon the other side of this chamber—positions which I think have been taken with great care and great reflection, with a view to defend the Administration, not only in the origin, but in the progress of this war; and more especially to notice some of the remarkable features which I find in the speech made several days ago by the gentleman from Maryland, from the Baltimore district, (Mr. McLANE.) I do not hesitate to characterize this as a remarkable speech, not only because it was delivered on this floor with great ingenuity, with great power, and with great eloquence, but because it went a bow-shot—an hundred bow-shots—beyond all the speeches which have been made here in the assumption of positions which I consider to be erroneous, and which not only do injustice to the Congress of the United States and the people of the United States, but manifest, marked injustice to the distinguished commander of our army, General Taylor. The gentleman, in my conception, has entirely mistaken the great questions of history which are involved in the origin and prosecution of the war, and has made these questions, thus misstated by him, subserve what, I think I shall be able to show, were exclusively and entirely the party purposes of this Administration.

The gentleman's speech, as originally written out by himself, I presume, and published in the "Union," contained the assumption—in order to justify the President

of the United States in the issuance of the order of the 13th January, 1846, for the march of the army to the valley of the Rio Grande—that the President, in his message of December, 1845, had communicated to Congress the fact that General Taylor had been ordered to march the army *to* the valley of the Rio Grande. I quote his words. He says: “In December, 1845, Congress was informed that General Taylor had been assigned to the defence of the country west *to* the Rio Grande.”

Now, I have carefully looked into the history of this thing; I have carefully examined all the public documents upon which I can lay my hands, and nowhere do I find, from the beginning to the end of all the communications which emanated from the President of the United States in December, 1845, or prior to that time, the declaration that General Taylor had been ordered to march the troops under his command *to* the Rio Grande. There was no such message, no such document to be found, no such political fact recorded in the history of the country. The President of the United States did communicate to Congress in December, 1845, that he had assigned General Taylor to the command of the army, and that his position was to be taken *between* the Nueces and the Rio Grande; but not that he was to march *to* the Rio Grande. The Secretary of War, at the commencement of that session, communicated to Congress intelligence of the fact that General Taylor had been assigned to the command of the country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, with an “*ultimate destination*” to the Rio Grande—with a purpose of *ultimately* occupying the valley of the Rio Grande; but nowhere, either in the message of the President, or in the report of the Secretary of War, was there any communication made to Congress that General Taylor was assigned to the command of the army, and ordered to march *to* the Rio Grande.

But, in the published speech of the gentleman in pamphlet form, I find a much greater mistake upon this subject. It was there declared that the President, in December, 1845, gave notice to Congress that General Taylor had been assigned to the defence of the country “west *of* the Rio Grande.”

[Mr. McLANE explained that this was a mistake. It should have been “west *to* the Rio Grande.” He requested the gentleman from Indiana to read from the document which he handed him.]

Mr. THOMPSON read as follows, from the President’s message of 2d December, 1845:

“Our army was ordered to take position in the country *between* the Nueces and the Del Norte, and to repel any invasion of the Texan territory which might be attempted by the Mexican forces.”

Also the following, from the despatch of Mr. Bancroft, of June 15, 1845, to General Taylor:

“The point of your ultimate destination is the western frontier of Texas, where you will select and occupy, on or near the Rio Grande del Norte, such a site as will consist with the health of the troops, and will be best adapted to repel invasion, and to protect what, *in the event of annexation*, will be our western border.”

Sir, neither of the positions of the gentleman are true, so far as they undertake to give a part of the public history of the times. There was no such order issued to General Taylor—no such fact communicated to Congress. He was ordered to take position *between* the Nueces and the Rio Grande, with the “*ultimate*” object of protecting the valley of the Rio Grande; and the extracts which I now read, at the request of the gentleman, prove this beyond controversy, and they prove nothing more. The express declaration of the President, in his message of 2d December, 1845, is that General Taylor had been ordered to take position “*between* the Nueces and the Del Norte.” Where was that position? Was it in the valley of the Rio Grande, with a view to its protection, as the gentleman asserts? No, sir, it was at Corpus Christi, in the valley of the Nueces—more than one hundred and fifty miles from the Rio Grande—from whence no protection could be given to that valley without marching the army across the “stupendous desert” which intervenes.

The last extract I have read, at the instance of the gentleman, is still more explicit than that from the message of the President. It declares that the valley of the Rio Grande was only the “*ultimate destination*” of the army; that it was not *then* to be protected, but might be *thereafter*. But it proves nothing in the present

controversy, and has no relation to it; for it is part of an order issued *before* the annexation of Texas to this country, and under which General Taylor took position at Corpus Christi, and remained there many months—not to protect the valley of the Rio Grande, but to resist the invasion of Texas by the army of Mexico, if such invasion should be attempted.

But the next position, untenable as I think it is, taken by the gentleman from Maryland, is the assumption that, by the act of Texas in the formation of her constitution, with which she was admitted into this Union, she adopted the statute of the Republic of Texas of 1836 as a part of her fundamental law; and that, by the admission of Texas into the Union, after the resolution of annexation was passed, with that constitution, she became, as a consequence, a part of this Union, to the extent of boundaries laid down in that statute.

I again quote the gentleman's own words. He says:

"A reference to this act of admission of the State of Texas, (29th December, 1845,) will show that it was the State of Texas that was admitted, with a constitution already formed, affirming the declaratory statutes which defined the boundary west to the Rio Grande; and with such boundary she was admitted a *State* into the Union."

I understood that, in the speech of the gentleman, as delivered here the other day, he first assumed that the constitution of Texas, existing at the time of her admission into this Union, defined her boundary line, in express terms, to be the Rio Grande; but that he afterwards changed his position, when the gentleman from Texas (Mr. KAUFMAN) came to his aid, and then assumed the position expressed in the extract I have read.

Let us, Mr. Chairman, look into the history of this question. If Texas had the right to pass that act, and thereby acquired the boundary claimed by it, and if the Congress of the United States did adopt that claim, of course there is now no question about it. But if Texas had no right to pass that law, if she acquired no title by it, then the whole claim set up by the President in behalf of the United States, and in his own defence founded upon it, falls to the ground.

Now, sir, the boundary of Texas, before her revolt against Mexico, was just as well defined as is the boundary between the District of Columbia and Maryland and Virginia. Originally the territory of Texas constituted a very small portion of what she afterwards possessed. Having been constituted a State, with Coahuila, of the Mexican Confederacy, the boundary between Texas and Coahuila and Tamaulipas was well known to be the Nueces. How, then, did she acquire boundary beyond that river? The gentleman admitted that the Texas which revolutionized was the Texas which was admitted into this Union. Then, she acquired no title but by revolution—no title that she has not maintained by the sword; and, if she has maintained title to the Rio Grande by the sword, why, then the Government of the United States would be compelled to recognise that title. But Texas never did, never has, and never will, except as aided by the power of the United States, maintain title by the sword to one foot beyond San Patricio county. The Nueces was the geographical division between her and Tamaulipas, and San Patricio was her western county, extending originally to the Nueces; but Texas, after her revolution, extended that county a short distance beyond the west bank of the Nueces, so as to take in Corpus Christi.

Texas passed the act of her Congress on 19th December, 1836, predicated on the right which she claimed to have acquired under her compact or agreement with Santa Anna. That compact or agreement gave her no power, no right, with reference to boundary. It was an agreement which, as was shown by the gentleman from Connecticut, (Mr. Dixon,) the other day, General Jackson repudiated—refused to recognise as of any binding validity upon anybody. What right, then, did Texas acquire under it? Why, by virtue of the constitution of Mexico of 1824, Santa Anna had no power to make a treaty; he was not the acting President of Mexico. It was true, if he had been at home, in the city of Mexico, he would have been; but the constitution of 1824 prescribed that, whenever the President of the Republic of Mexico was in the field commanding her armies, the Vice President should perform the functions of President. These are the words of that instrument:

"The restriction of the faculties of the President are the following: First, the President cannot take command of the forces by sea or land, in person, without the previous consent of the General Congress; or, should it not be in session, without the Council of Government, by a vote of two-thirds of the members present. When he takes the command with these requisites, *the Vice President shall administer the Government.*"

It will be seen, therefore, that when Santa Anna was in the field, his functions as President ceased; and as military commander, it is unquestionably clear that he had no right to make an agreement in regard to the territory or property of Mexico, except such as was personal only to himself, and those uniting with him. He did make such an agreement while a prisoner of war in the hands of the Texans, for the purpose of regaining his liberty, having no reference whatever to *permanent* boundary, and which would have been utterly nugatory if it had. There was no right acquired by Texas on the subject of boundary in consequence of that agreement. But if there had been, it was predicated on the idea that the agreement should afterwards be ratified—be made into a treaty by commissioners to be appointed on the part of Texas, who should meet commissioners on the part of Mexico, *in the city of Mexico*. No commissioners were appointed on either side. But Texas, of her own will, passed the law of 1836, defining her boundary line to be the Rio Grande. She had no right to do it. It was an act of usurpation—the usurpation of territory over which she had acquired no control by revolution, by this compact, or by treaty.

Then, if the act of 1836 was not passed by authority on the part of Texas, if she acquired no right by it, how could we have acquired a right by it, even though we had adopted it? Unquestionably we could acquire none. But, in point of fact, we did not recognise the act of 1836 as being obligatory upon us by the terms of annexation. Every body knows that the cause of the rejection of the Tyler treaty was, that it proposed to annex Texas, to the Rio Grande, to the United States. The gentleman shakes his head. I refer him to the course of debate on that question, to the resolutions introduced by the distinguished Senators who opposed that treaty, and he will there see that one of the prime causes of opposition to it was, that it proposed to annex a part of Mexico. By many of the distinguished men of the gentleman's own party it was opposed on that very ground. The terms of annexation, as provided in the joint resolution, were so shaped as to avoid the difficulty which had been encountered in the annexation of Texas by the Tyler treaty. And they were made so with design; done, not simply for the purpose of procuring Texas, but done by a party, banded together from one end of the country to the other, with the express and deliberate view of deceiving the people of the country on that very question. Why, need we now to be told, that all over this country, when the opponents of annexation declared that annexation was identical with war, its advocates ridiculed the idea, and endeavored to make the country believe there would be no war? But gentlemen now turn about, and frankly acknowledge they have been wrong. The gentleman from Maryland told the House the other day that we procured the *war* at "the cost of annexation." Yes, sir, he spoke most truly; the sad experience of the last two years had not failed to convince even the warmest advocates of annexation of that fact. The joint resolution of annexation, as I verily believe, was shaped with especial reference to deceive the people of this country on the question of annexation.

I repeat, therefore, that Texas having acquired no title by the act declaring her boundary to be the Rio Grande, none could have been conferred on the United States, if we had adopted that act. But we did not. In the constitution of Texas, with which she was received into the Union, and which was adopted after the joint resolution for annexation had passed, there was an express provision that all acts of her Congress were affirmed and continued in full force, *except those in derogation of the Constitution of the United States, or in violation of the terms of annexation*. Now, the joint resolution of annexation, as one of its most prominent features, contained a provision that the question of boundary should be left to be settled by negotiation. And if the question of boundary were to be settled by negotiation, how could this act of 1836 be otherwise than inconsistent with the joint resolution?

That act fixed the boundary without negotiation, declared the Rio Grande to be the western boundary, and, as a matter of course, by the express terms of annexation, had no binding force upon the United States. Texas, herself, could not have regarded that statute as affirmed by her constitution; for, by excepting all acts in conflict with our joint resolution, she, in point of fact, repealed the act of 19th December, 1836. Such is the legal effect of her own constitution, solemnly made and ratified, and by its terms she must now stand.

But the gentleman from Texas (Mr. KAUFMAN) told the committee, the other day, that the act of 1836 was regarded by Texas as conferring jurisdiction upon her to the Rio Grande. And to what extent? Why, the gentleman said, from the mouth of the Rio Grande to its source. I was astonished to hear that declaration from the gentleman from Texas—that Texas had jurisdiction and occupancy from the mouth to the source of the Rio Grande! Why, the gentleman seemed to have forgotten that we were now in the *military* possession of that country. Although, according to the argument of that gentleman, and of others, we annexed this whole country, from the mouth to the source of the Rio Grande, to the United States, as part and parcel of Texas, yet the President of the United States was now exercising *military jurisdiction* over a part of this territory; and the people there, under this martial law, were now being called upon to determine of themselves whether they would be *annexed* to the United States or not! And not only this, but the President of the United States was also trying to buy that country, or to hold it as indemnity for the expenses of this war!—though, at the same time, the gentleman from Texas, the gentleman from Maryland, and others, told us it was a part of Texas as actually annexed to the United States!

The gentleman from Maryland went further; and, in order to show that the Congress of the United States had recognised the Rio Grande as the boundary line, alluded to another fact, which he declared to exist, viz., that Congress had organized revenue districts in the State of Texas in such a way, as that one was bounded on the west by the Rio Grande. I again quote the gentleman's words. He says: "Subsequently Congress organized the revenue districts in Texas in such wise, that one district was bounded on the *west* by the *Nueces*, another on the *east* by the *Nueces* and the *west* by the *Rio Grande*."

Now, sir, I should be very much obliged to the gentleman from Maryland if he would show me that part of the history of the proceedings of Congress from which he derives this information; if he will show me, anywhere on our statute book, a single act of the Congress of the United States which defines the Rio Grande as the western boundary of any collection district. Congress did pass an act, on the 31st December, 1845, establishing *one* revenue district in Texas. It declares:

"That the State of Texas shall be *one collection district*, and the city of Galveston the only port of entry, to which shall be annexed Sabine, Velasco, Matagorda, Cavallo, La Vaca, and Corpus Christi, as ports of delivery only."

On the 3d March, 1847—*after* Gen. Taylor was ordered to the Rio Grande—a new collection district was formed out of that part of the State of Texas "south and west of the counties of Matagorda and Wharton, and including said counties." For this district Saluria, on the northeasterly part of the island of Matagorda, was constituted the port of entry, and Matagorda, Aransas, Capano, and Corpus Christi, ports of delivery only. Notwithstanding the unqualified terms of these laws, and the fact that *before* the order of the 13th of January, 1846, was issued there was created but *one* revenue district out of the whole State of Texas, the gentleman from Maryland asserts that there were *two* districts established; the western boundary of one of which, he has informed us, was the *Rio Grande*! The fact is, as appears from the acts from which I have read, that *Corpus Christi* was the extreme southwestern *port of delivery*, and no where *beyond* that point did either of these acts pretend to establish either a port of entry or of delivery. Not a word is said in them about the Rio Grande; nor is there to be found any provision whatsoever for the extension of our revenue districts to the Rio Grande. Congress did not intend, by these acts, to go beyond the point to which the jurisdiction of Texas ex-

tended at the time of annexation. That point was the county of San Patricio, which had been extended so as to embrace Corpus Christi and the territory immediately adjacent, but had never, at that time, gone farther.

Mr. McLANE. I admit that the port of delivery established by this law was at Corpus Christi; but there was an inspector of customs appointed under the law to reside at Point Isabel, on the Rio Grande.

Mr. THOMPSON continued:

Then, sir, if the President did, as the gentleman from Maryland says he did, appoint an inspector of customs at Point Isabel, he clearly violated the law of Congress, and appointed an inspector *within territory occupied by Mexico*, where he had no right to collect a single dollar of customs, or to exercise jurisdiction in any way whatever.*

Mr. GRINNELL, with the consent of Mr. THOMPSON, remarked, that by an understanding with one of the members from Texas during the last session, it was agreed that the disputed territory should not be embraced with these revenue districts.

Mr. THOMPSON resumed:

Mr. Chairman, the law which I have read proves just what the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. GRINNELL) says was understood at the time of its passage; that is, that though ports of delivery were established at several places, there were none at Point Isabel, nor beyond Corpus Christi. Congress never legislated for the disputed territory until after the order of the 13th January, 1846, was issued.

After the commencement of the war gentlemen would find that post routes were established from Brasos de Santiago to Point Isabel and Fort Brown. Before the war there were none beyond Corpus Christi, and hence gentlemen were in error in supposing that Congress had recognised the disputed territory by the establishment of post routes, as some had declared. The post routes established since the commencement of the war had been rendered necessary to facilitate communication with the army. The reason why Congress did not establish post routes beyond Corpus Christi was, because the county of San Patricio was only originally recognised as extending to the Nueces river; but Texas, after she acquired her independence, exercised civil jurisdiction beyond it, to a short distance, so as to embrace Corpus Christi. It was true, however, that, since this war had commenced, she had extended her jurisdiction to the Rio Grande, so far as her legislation could do it. This I find; from an article copied into the *Intelligencer* of this morning, is attended with some embarrassment. The paper to which I refer contained a paragraph, which was in these words:

"From the settlements on the Rio Grande to the county seat at Corpus Christi it is full five days' journey, through a wilderness country, almost destitute of water, NOT A HABITATION IN THE WHOLE DISTANCE, and dangerous to travellers on account of the Indians and bands of lawless Mexicans. When persons residing on the Rio Grande border of the county are cited to appear at Corpus Christi, it takes at least two weeks to comply with the citation, besides subjecting them to the difficulties and dangers of the road."

It will be seen, then, that it is an easy matter to acquire territory; for, so soon as Texas was annexed to the United States, the Texan Congress passed an act to extend her boundary to the Rio Grande; and thus it was that the "stupendous desert" was legislated into Texas, and constituted part of it. This part of the public history of the country is perfectly familiar to every gentleman to whom I now address myself; but there are some peculiar features of it, growing out of the recognition of Texas itself, which show that, till this war commenced, Texas did not consider her title to the Rio Grande to be good. I have here an extract written by one of the Presidents of Texas, who is now sitting as a United States Senator at the other end of the Capitol, which sustains me in this position. I find it in "Hous-

* Since this speech was delivered I have examined, and find the fact to be, that *no inspector of customs was ever appointed for Point Isabel*. The law did not authorize such an officer. The act of 31st December, 1845, provided for a collector at Galveston, and a surveyor for each of the ports of delivery. That of March 3, 1847, provided for a collector at Saluria, a deputy collector at Aransas, a deputy collector for Sabine, and for surveyors at the several ports of delivery created by that act—all east of Corpus Christi. By the Blue Book of 1848 I find that all the officers of customs appointed in Texas, by the President, reside at Galveston, Velasco, and Sabine.

ton and his Republic," as a part of a *private* letter to Mr. Murphy, the *charge des affaires* from this country to Texas. President Houston says: "The line of Texas running with the Arkansas, and extending to the GREAT DESERT, would mark a *natural boundary* between Texas, or a new and vast republic to the southwest."

Besides this, I have the authority of Gen. Memucan Hunt. This gentleman was sent to this country, in 1837, by the government of Texas, to solicit the admission of Texas into our Union. In one of his letters to Mr. Forsyth, then Secretary of State, he said: "Texas has a territory estimated at *near* 200,000 square miles."

How vastly, Mr. Chairman, have the proportions of Texas increased since that time. What is the State of Texas *now*, as bounded by gentlemen on the other side of the Hall, and by her Representatives in this House? A territory of near 500,000 square miles! From less than 200,000 she has become a country of near 500,000 square miles, and all by *her own legislation*! Gen. Hunt—her own authorized ambassador—declared that, in 1837, she had *less than one-half* of what she now claims. Her revolution was then at an end, and she has acquired no additional territory by treaty, purchase, or conquest, since. From whence, then, does she derive her right? The plain and honest truth is, that she has not now, and never had, any right beyond that which she acquired by her revolution. That right never did extend to the valley of the Rio Grande.

But I have other authority from Texas herself. In 1837 Mexico captured two Texan vessels, the Independence and Julius Cæsar, and their crews. In May of that year, the House of Representatives of Texas passed a resolution directing that the armed schooners Brutus and Invincible should be sent, *with a flag of truce*, to *Brasos Santiago*, to treat with the *Mexican* authorities there for the release of these vessels, and of such Texans as might be held as prisoners. Would Texas have done this—would she have sent a flag of truce to "*Mexican authorities*" within her own limits, if she had been conscious of a rightful claim to the valley of the Rio Grande? But she knew she had no such claim, and therefore she was compelled, in 1837, to recognise the rightful possession and ownership of Mexico. Nor, in my opinion, would she have pretended otherwise to this day, if she had not succeeded in "*coquetting*" this Government into the assertion and maintenance of her claim.

The entire history of Texas, previous to her annexation to this country, shows that what I have said is true. If gentlemen will take the trouble to look at that history, and read especially the journals of the Texan Congress, which are to be found here in our library, they will find that this territory, between the Nueces and the Rio del Norte, was by all parties, *after the act of 19th December, 1836*, admitted to be the territory and property of Mexico, and to be in the occupancy of the Mexican people. And yet the gentleman from Baltimore told us, the other day, that Mexico had taken an *offensive* position there, and we a *defensive* one. Why, the people who were in the valley of the Rio Grande were born there and reared there; it was their home, and they were driven from the homes of their childhood by the troops which the President of the United States sent there. Talk of those people taking an *offensive* position! How could they *offensively* occupy a place where they had been born and raised, and the possession of which they had never yielded up to any body? The valley of the Rio Grande was not a part of Texas; and the President had no authority to issue the order of the 13th January, 1846, sending our troops there. I have said, and I now repeat, that in my opinion, if the history of this annexation movement was truly written, it would show that it was all a plan of deception from the beginning, and that our Government had been plunged into all the present difficulty by a concealment of the truth regarding it. At the very time we were discussing, in this country, the question of annexation, and the probabilities of a war which it would bring on, our *charge d'affaires* to Texas had the power in his possession to order American troops beyond the line of the United States into Texas. He had power to do this before the consummation of annexation. He had authority from the President in his pocket to do that which the President himself had no power to do—to march the troops of this Union beyond the line of the Union.

Mr. McLANE. Was that a Whig, or a Democratic President?

Mr. THOMPSON. It was the act of John Tyler, to which you and your party became *particeps criminis*—for when we cast him off, as no longer worthy of our association, he became fit material for you to use. It was done by the administration of President Tyler, and the present President of the United States ratified and confirmed all he had done in regard to the annexation of Texas.

The order of the 28th June, 1848, which sent Gen. Taylor from Fort Towson to Corpus Christi, was issued *before* the consummation of annexation. Texas, having been rejected by Mr. Van Buren's administration, refused to come into our Union when solicited to do so by Mr. Tyler, until she received a *secret* pledge from our *charge d'affaires* that we would maintain her boundary to the Rio Grande. I have no doubt that such a pledge was made, although not communicated to the people of the United States. Gen. Houston, in his letter of July 18, 1847, to the editor of the Texas Banner, and in reply to a letter of Mr. Tyler's, says:

"The Executive of Texas was not moved by the "direct proposition for annexation," but by the *pledges given to him by Mr. Murphy, charge d'affaires of the United States*. Before an adjunct commissioner was appointed by the President, *pledges were demanded by him of Mr. Murphy*, based upon Mr. Upshur's letter, that a military and naval force of the United States, sufficient for the defence of Texas, *should be placed at the disposition of the President, and held subject to his orders.*"

What "*pledges*" are here referred to? Were they merely that Texas should be protected within her just limits, in the event of annexation? Such would have been the result of annexation without pledges. Did they have reference to the defence of Texas on this side the Rio Nueces? Texas well knew, and so did the people of this country, that Mexico would never again attempt to repossess herself of the territory which she then held by virtue of her revolutionary right. These "*pledges*," therefore, could have referred to nothing else than the occupancy of the territory in the valley of the Rio Grande; to consummate which arrangement, thus secretly made without the knowledge of the people of the United States, the army and navy of the United States were "*placed at the disposition of the President*" of Texas, "*and held subject to his order;*" and that, too, before the people of Texas had ratified the act of annexation. From whence did the President of the United States derive authority, thus, without law or public sanction, to pledge the people of the United States? It was but a portion of the studied system of party diplomacy by which the scheme of annexation was begun, prosecuted, and ended—a scheme whose chief workers knew neither Constitution nor law, when they stood in the way of their cherished purpose.

But I have other evidence that this *pledge* of which I have spoken was made as an inducement to the annexation of Texas. Mr. Anson Jones, Secretary of State of the Republic of Texas, on the 6th of August, 1844—*six months before the joint resolution for annexation was passed by the Congress of the United States*—addressed a letter to Gen. Howard, then our *charge d'affaires* to Texas, in which he says:

"In view of these facts, and adverting to the *assurances given to this Government by Gen. Murphy, charge d'affaires of the United States, on the 14th of February, and by Mr. Calhoun, Secretary of State, on the 11th of April last, the undersigned, by direction of his excellency the President, has the honor to request that Gen. Howard will, as early as convenient, take the necessary steps to cause to be carried into effect these assurances, and to extend to Texas the aid which the present emergency requires.*"

Gen. Howard, like an honest man and a patriot—as he most unquestionably was—and having the welfare of his country more at heart than the consummation of any mere party scheme, refused to execute these "*assurances*," as they had been given by Mr. Murphy. He replied to Mr. Jones, that the Government of the United States would go as far to redeem them "*as it constitutionally might,*" but that they had raised no "*obligation on the President of the United States to interpose, by affording military aid to Texas in the [then] present emergency.*"

Sir, if this matter had been left just where Gen. Howard placed it, we should, in all probability, have had neither annexation nor war. But it did not so remain. The administration of Mr. Tyler, after the death of Gen. Howard, gave to Mr. Donelson the power to do what Gen. Howard had refused to do—that is, to ratify the "*assurances*" and "*pledges*" of Mr. Murphy; and thus, as the means of procuring Texas, we became involved in that series of measures which have led to this war;

thus we became fettered in a net, cunningly devised to decoy, and which has most admirably answered the ends of those who wove it. By reversing the decision of Gen. Howard, power was given to Mr. Donelson to order our troops into Texas *before* annexation, if necessary for its defence. They were "placed at the disposition of the President" of Texas, "and held subject to *his* orders." This authority was not revoked, but continued by the present administration. How it has been executed is to be seen from the fact, that since the 28th of June, 1845, when Gen. Taylor was ordered to advance to Corpus Christi, we have been gradually advancing towards a state of war, under a system of policy controlled only by the Executive and his advisers—about which the people have not been consulted, and of which they have known nothing; until the past has become the reality of history.

The present President of the United States, when he issued the order to General Taylor to march to the Rio Grande, was but following in the line of precedents which had been furnished him by this annexation movement. That order was a clear, palpable, and direct violation of the Constitution of the United States. If the territory on the Rio Grande belonged to Mexico, and was in the possession of Mexico, it was a violation of Mexican rights, and was an act of war. If it was merely disputed territory, the President had no right to take possession of it in violation of the law of Congress, which provided that the title should be determined by "negotiation." Even though it had been justly claimed by Texas, he had no right, while the peaceable citizens of Mexico were occupying it, to attempt their dislodgement by military force, until he had obtained the consent of the Congress and the people of the United States. In any possible aspect, it was an act of usurpation which has found no parallel in our history, but will hereafter be looked at only, I trust, as evidence of the mad ambition of those who contrived it, and as warning against its imitation by the desolation it has produced.

Was the march of our army to the Rio Grande necessary to the defence of any Texan possessions there? Texas had no possessions there. Every foot of that great valley, from Brazos de Santiago to Santa Fe, was in the occupancy of the Mexican people—an occupancy which had never been disturbed by Texas or any of her armies. How could the President of the United States disturb it, without a violation of Mexican rights? Gentlemen upon the other side of the House have wholly failed to answer this question, but struggle hard to avoid its force by declaring that the President acted in conformity to the recommendations of Gen. Taylor. The gentleman from Maryland, still going farther than any of them, says, that the order of the 13th January, 1846, was not issued "until months after General Taylor, who was entrusted with the defence and protection of Texas, *had repeatedly urged and advised the movement*, upon high considerations of military and *political propriety*."

Now, sir, words are very significant things, and a single word, misapplied, often does great mischief. Other gentlemen have asserted that General Taylor *advised* the movement to the Rio Grande. Such was the argument of my friend and colleague over the way (Mr. ROBINSON.) But I have heard nobody, except the gentleman from Maryland, (Mr. McLANE,) say that he "*repeatedly urged*" it. This accusation does very great injustice to Gen. Taylor—a gallant and well-tried soldier; for he never either "*urged*" or *repeated* his advice of such a movement. On the contrary, all the *suggestions* made by him upon the subject were qualified before the issuance of the order. Yet, notwithstanding this, the gentleman says he "*repeatedly urged*" the marching of the troops to the Rio Grande. Sir, it is not easy to mistake the true position of Gen. Taylor in this matter. He never did *positively* recommend the occupancy of the Rio Grande valley. He wrote *hypothetically*, whenever he wrote to the Department on the subject; always having reference to the "*ultimate destination*" of his army as previously indicated to him by both Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Marcy. I repeat, therefore, that to represent him in a different position from that in which his published letters place him, is doing him great, very great injustice. If there is nothing in his position to do so, his distinguished services, at the head of a gallant army, should guard him against such accusations. It is but a poor reward for his toils now to be told, after he has braved the dangers of the camp and field to bring this war to an honorable termination, that he has interfered with the

political policy of the Government, when the strict line of duty called him to another and a wholly different sphere. As a soldier, he has obeyed the orders of his Government; as a commander, he has covered himself with imperishable fame; but in neither capacity has he ever undertaken to prescribe a course of *political* policy for this Administration. He knows his duty too well, and I do not believe that he would swerve from its straightest line for power, patronage, or place.

Mr. McLANE. Will the gentleman from Indiana read the extract which I hand him from General Taylor's letter of November 7, 1845, to settle the question of fact at issue between us?

Mr. THOMPSON. Certainly, sir, I will. It is as follows:

"The position now occupied by the troops may perhaps be the best while negotiations are pending; at any rate, until a disposition shall be manifested by Mexico to protract them unreasonably."

"On the hypothesis of an early adjustment of the boundary, and the consequent establishment of permanent frontier posts, I cannot urge too thoroughly upon the Department the necessity of occupying those posts before the warm weather shall set in."

Does not the gentleman see and know, that what is said by Gen. Taylor in this letter of the 7th November, 1845, has reference expressly to what had previously passed between him and the Department? I will read the whole letter.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF OCCUPATION,
Corpus Christi, Texas, November 7, 1845.

Sir: I respectfully enclose a copy of a letter from Commodore Conner, commanding the home squadron, which I received by the "Saratoga," sloop of war, on the 5th instant. The intelligence communicated by the Commodore will, doubtless, reach the seat of Government long before the receipt of this letter.

The communication from the Secretary of War, dated October 16, was received and acknowledged on the 1st and 2d instant. I purposely deferred a detailed reply to the various points embraced in that communication until I could receive an answer to mine of October 4, which covered (at least in part) the same ground. The intelligence from Mexico, however, tends to modify, in some degree, the views expressed in that communication. The position now occupied by the troops may, perhaps, be the best while negotiations are pending, or at any rate until a disposition shall be manifested by Mexico to protract them unreasonably. Under the supposition that such may be the view of the Department, I shall make no movement from this point, except for the purpose of examining the country, until further instructions are received. You will perceive, from my orders, that reconnoissance are almost constantly in the field, the officers of engineers and topographical engineers rendering valuable service on those duties. I refer you to the reports made by those officers to the chiefs of their own bureaux for the information which is thus procured in relation to the country. An examination of the harbor of Brazos Santiago will be ordered in a few days—as soon as a proper vessel shall become disposable for that service.

In case no movement is made this season towards the Rio Grande, I may find it necessary to detach a portion of the army a short distance into the interior, where wood can be more readily procured than here. But in no case do I deem it necessary to hut the troops. Sheds, with platforms, on which to pitch the tents, were extensively used in camps of position in Florida, and will, I cannot doubt, form a sufficient protection here.

On the hypothesis of an early adjustment of the boundary, and the consequent establishment of permanent frontier posts, I cannot urge too strongly upon the Department the necessity of occupying those posts before the warm weather shall set in. A large amount of sickness is, I fear, to be apprehended, with every precaution that can be taken; but the information which I obtain leads me to believe that a summer movement would be attended with great expense of health and life. As in Florida, the winter is the best season for operations in Texas.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,
Brevet Brig. General U. S. A., commanding.

The ADJUTANT GENERAL of the Army, Washington, D. C.

Sir, it will be seen by this letter—in the very sentence which follows directly the first one I have read at the request of the gentleman from Maryland, that Gen. Taylor, expressly said: "Under the supposition that such may be the view of the Department, I shall make no movement from this point, except for the purpose of examining the country, until further instructions are received." Could language be more explicit? Could he have employed any phraseology which would more completely have thrown the responsibility of a movement from Corpus Christi upon the Administration? Sir, there is no mistaking language so plain. Those who run may read and understand it.

But this letter settles another question against the gentleman from Maryland. I have shown that the sentence following the first I have read, at his request, proves that General Taylor did *not* here either *urge* or *recommend* the movement to the

Rio Grande. The sentence immediately preceding the first one, read at his instance, will also prove that "the intelligence from Mexico," then in his possession, tended "to *modify*, in some degree, the views expressed in his letter of 4th October, 1845." What was that letter? In it he says:

"It is with great deference that I make any suggestions on topics which may become matter of delicate negotiation; but *if our Government, in settling the question of boundary, makes the line of the Rio Grande an ultimatum*, I cannot doubt that the settlement will be greatly *facilitated and hastened* by our taking possession at once of one or two suitable points on or quite near that river."

Now, Mr. Chairman, what does all this amount to? Does not the gentleman see that the *suggestions* of General Taylor were *hypothetical* merely? He had, as I have already shown, been informed, both by Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Marcy, that his "*ultimate destination*" was the Rio Grande; and *on the hypothesis* only that the army were destined by the Government to occupy that territory, he wrote to the Administration that *if it were to be done*, for certain reasons, it was better that it should be done at once. But as a *political* recommendation to this Government General Taylor never did unconditionally advise that our army shall be marched to the Rio Grande. I cannot consent that such an impression should be sought to be made without denial, which denial I now make, and will not retract, without evidence greatly more than I have yet seen.

Every word he has said on the subject, both in his letter of October 4th, and in that of November 7th, is *hypothetical* merely—only conditional upon the fact that the Government intended to pursue the policy which had been already indicated to him by the Secretaries of War and the Navy. But *hypothetical* as it was, it was qualified, withdrawn, taken back, if you please, in the letter of November 7th, in which he distinctly informed the Administration that he "*should make no movement*" from Corpus Christi "*until further instructions are received*." Never did any man more explicitly declare his designs, and it is passing strange that they should be so wholly misconceived.

We have been repeatedly told by gentlemen here, that the refusal of the Mexican Government to receive Mr. Slidell was a sufficient justification of the order which marched the troops to the Rio Grande. There is, to my mind, something exceedingly singular in this part of our history. If I understand it it is this. Our Government learned through Mr. Black, our consul, that the Mexican Government would receive, not an *envoy extraordinary*, but a *commissioner*. Such a commissioner was never sent; but an envoy extraordinary was sent. This minister was Mr. Slidell, who went to Mexico and presented his credentials. He was not received by the administration of Herrera, he then being in power. The refusal to receive him was communicated to this Government in a letter from Mr. Slidell, dated 27th December, 1845, which was not received in Washington until the 23d of January, 1846—*ten days after the order to Gen. Taylor to march to the Rio Grande was issued*. These are the facts, as communicated to Congress by the President with his war message of 11th May, 1846.

Mr. Slidell, in his letter of 27th December, 1845, says:

"On the 21st instant I received from Mr. *Pena y Pena* his promised reply, conveying the *formal and unqualified refusal* of the Mexican Government to receive me in the character for which I am commissioned. Of this most extraordinary document I send a copy."

This letter of Mr. Slidell was the *first* written by him after his rejection. He had, on the 17th of the same month, written to Mr. Buchanan that his refusal was "*a possible* (I ought perhaps to say a probable) event;" but he had not then been refused. He was not rejected by Herrera's administration until the 21st December. This the President admits in his war message. He says:

"The Government of General Herrera, there is good reason to believe, was sincerely desirous to receive our minister; but it yielded to the storm raised by its enemies, and, on the 21st of December, refused to accredit Mr. Slidell upon the most frivolous pretexts."

The President, then, has predicated his apology for the order of 13th January, 1846, upon this rejection. Could he have known it at the time this order was issued? I have already said that Mr. Slidell's letter communicating it was not received here until ten days afterwards; and I make this remark upon the authority

of the Secretary of State. In his letter to Mr. Slidell, of January 28, 1846, Mr. Buchanan says: "Your despatches, dated the 27th and 29th December last, *were received at this Department on the 23d instant.*"

What room is there, then, for longer debate about this question? The facts are too plain to admit of cavil. General Taylor *was* ordered to the Rio Grande *before* the President had heard one word from Mr. Slidell on the subject of the final action of the Herrera administration. He was ordered there, and our navy was ordered to the Gulf, while the Administration was professing to desire a *peaceable* adjustment of all difficulties with Mexico. He was ordered there without authority of law, though Congress was in session, and in palpable violation of the Constitution. He was ordered there, because the cherished policy of this Administration could be carried out in no other way than by forcing Mexico into a war, as some excuse for the conquest of her territory.

Sir, the President and his friends did not consider Mr. Slidell as *finally rejected*, because he had been refused by the Herrera administration. Far from it. On the 12th of March, 1846—*two months after General Taylor had been ordered to the Rio Grande*—Mr. Buchanan wrote to Mr. Slidell:

"I am directed by the President to instruct you not to leave that Republic until you shall have made a formal demand *to be received by the new government.*"

At the same time he transmitted to him a letter, accrediting him to General Paredes, the then President of Mexico. Mr. Slidell had already, before the reception of this letter, made an attempt to negotiate with the new Administration; and, on the 1st March, 1846, had written to Mr. Buchanan from Jalapa, that his letters from Mexico spoke "*confidently of his reception.*" But, on the 18th of March, he again wrote to Mr. Buchanan that he had received a "*peremptory refusal*" from the Mexican Government, and had demanded his passports. And before the intelligence communicated in this last letter of Mr. Slidell reached here, the Administration remained confident, even after the letter of 27th December, 1845, that Mr. Slidell would be received. I find in the "*Union*," the acknowledged organ of the Government, the following, as late as the 10th February, 1846:

"Letters were received last night, in this city, by special conveyance from Mexico and Vera Cruz. The letters from the city of Mexico are to the 14th of January, at which time Mr. Slidell was in the city, but was expected to arrive at Jalapa on the 17th. He had obtained an escort to that place. *Not the slightest insult had been offered to him, as has been reported; but he had been received with much courtesy, and he had been welcomed in the society of the metropolis as an elegant and accomplished gentleman.* He had not been received by the Government in his official capacity; NEITHER HAD THEY DECLINED HIS RECEPTION; and in fact, judging by appearances, there was no reason to believe that he would not be as acceptable to the Government of Paredes as to that of Herrera."

Here was an annunciation to the country, made by authority of the Administration—nearly one month *after* Gen. Taylor had been ordered to leave Corpus Christi—that Mr. Slidell *had not been rejected!* And if gentlemen would take the pains to look into the documents, they will see that the "*Union*" then spoke truly. The letter of the 14th of January was evidently written by Mr. Slidell to Mr. Buchanan, to which the writer of the article in the "*Union*" must have had access. In a letter of that date, Mr. Slidell refers to the formation of the Paredes cabinet, and speaks in very complimentary terms of Mr. Castillo y Lanzas, the minister of foreign relations. He says:

"He is an intelligent and well educated gentleman, and were he permitted to exercise any control, would, as I have reason to know, from *free conversation with him*, at a time when he had no idea of being appointed to his present place, be *decidedly favorable to an amicable adjustment of all questions pending between the two governments.*"

In the same letter he also says: "My notes to Mr. Pena y Pena have been submitted to the council of government, *but have not yet been considered.*" All this was done and said *after* the issuance of the order of 13th January, 1846, that fatal order which had plunged this country into the present ruinous and protracted war. Yet, notwithstanding all this array of facts, we are told by gentlemen here, and by the President himself, and by his whole party, that Mr. Slidell was rejected by the Mexican government *before* this order was issued, and that it was issued in consequence thereof. Sir, there is nothing in the history of this transaction to sustain or justify

this assertion—for it is nothing but *assertion*. On the contrary, I do verily believe, that this Administration did not desire that Mr. Slidell should be received, but that it has used the pretence of his rejection as excuse for the war. It is manifest to my mind, that it had deliberately resolved to bring on the war, at any hazard to the country, or why should the President now refuse to communicate to this House his instructions to Mr. Slidell? And having thus plunged the country into it, if any man is honest enough or bold enough to call upon the President for information in relation to its origin, or, in any other way, to question his executive infallibility, he is forthwith denounced as “giving aid and comfort to the enemy.” Such is the language used on the other side of the House towards gentlemen on this side, as if that oft-repeated and stereotyped phrase could now be dignified by repetition in this Hall.

We were told, sir, at the beginning of the war, that we were fighting with Mexico because she owed us debts and would not pay them. I fear if this were so, that some of the States of this Union would be exposed to the danger of a war. The gentlemen from Mississippi, and myself and colleagues, perhaps, might get into a scrape, as well as some on this side of the mountains, if it were so. And even the gentleman from Maryland might not escape. According to his argument, if Great Britain should declare war because some of our States did not pay their debts, the war would be just on her part and unjust on ours. But this was all a mere pretence. The truth was, the Administration was determined to bring on the war, and to do it they sent Mr. Slidell to Mexico, with the determination that he should be rejected. At the same time a fleet was placed in the Gulf, and the army prepared for marching to the Rio Grande. If gentlemen would look at the reasons for the ultimate rejection of Mr. Slidell, it would be seen that they were assigned by Paredes to be that the army was marching into Mexico on the north, while the navy was ready to blockade the Mexican ports on the Gulf. It was not to be expected that Mexico should treat under such circumstances. It was contrary to the Mexican character that they should be forced to negotiate, and the President knew it. And Paredes did not improperly judge the Administration; for, while a pretended pacificator was sent by our Government to Mexico, provision had already been made for moving our army to the Mexican frontier and placing our navy in her ports, which the President must have known would cause the Spanish spirit to rebel. In “*anticipation*” of the rejection of Mr. Slidell, it was said, the order was given. Yes, it was designed that it should be so; and, in anticipation of the desired result, Gen. Taylor was sent to the Rio Grande. Thus the ball was opened. Then came that famous act, with a falsehood on its face, declaring that the war existed by the act of Mexico, by which the minority here were placed in the position either to refuse supplies or to swallow that false “preamble.” Under the power which the rules gave them, the majority forced it through this House. But if the fact were as the preamble asserted, what occasion was there for the preamble at all? No such preamble was adopted in 1812. Then Congress was content with a simple declaration of war, without a preamble. Truth, neither then nor now requires disguise. The very fact that the preamble is there, proves that the friends of the administration were afraid to trust the question to the calm judgment of the country. But that judgment will be exercised in despite of all their denunciations, let them come as thick and fast as they may.

But when this act of Congress was passed, under pretence that General Taylor’s army was about to be cut off, what did the President do? Why, sir, instead of sending the troops intended by Congress for that purpose, he organized a portion of them, and sent them to New Mexico and California to make *conquests* of those countries, in violation of the spirit of the Constitution and the letter of the law itself. He sent forces there with instructions to establish *civil* governments, when he had only the power to hold them, even after conquest, by *military* authority. The result was the most singular state of things now existing in both New Mexico and California. He directed the oath of allegiance to this Government to be administered to the inhabitants of those countries, and, in case of refusal, they were to be treated as traitors, and hung. Legislatures were organized, officers both appointed and elected, and the people directed to vote on the question of *annexation to the United States!* And this voting, too, be it borne in mind, is to be had under fear of being charged

with treason, if the citizens of those countries refuse obedience to the laws thus imposed on them by the sword. If they should now ask for admission into this Union under these circumstances, we shall doubtless be told that they are exceedingly anxious to be annexed, when the whole, in point of fact, will be done by the power of the sword—that stern arbiter, which has settled the fate and destiny of millions before.

This is the same power with which Tamerlane overrun the countries of the East—by which, as history proves, so many other portions of the globe have been subdued and desolated. It is the power of the purse and the sword now doing that which, under institutions such as ours, is confided alone to the people—a power, too, which is exercised in the name of Democracy, but is used as a deadly stab at the vitals of the nation. So far as the question of power is concerned, I do not care whether Mr. Slidell was or was not rejected by the Mexican Government. The President of the United States was equally guilty of a violation of the Constitution of the United States when he issued the order of the 13th January, whether Mr. Slidell was or was not rejected. Mr. Buchanan, the Secretary of State, pointed out, in his letter to Mr. Slidell, the course which the Executive ought to have pursued. He said if Mr. Slidell should be “finally” rejected, he should report that fact to the President, and it would “then become the *duty* of the President to *submit the whole case to Congress*, and call upon the nation to assert its just rights, and avenge its injured honor.” But did the President do this? Did he submit the “whole case,” or any part of it, to Congress? Did he “call upon the nation” for its authority in the execution of his designs? The representatives of the people were then sitting in this Hall. Here was the war-making power of the Union. Here, by their representatives, were the people of this country, in whose hands alone are these great issues placed by the Constitution. Why, then, did not the President pursue the course pointed out by the Secretary of State, by the Constitution, and by the past practice of the Government? It did not answer his designs to do so. It would not have comported with those *secret* purposes to which I have already referred. I believe, as sincerely as I do that we are all ultimately responsible to a God of justice, that if the people of this Union had not been cunningly, cautiously, and most studiously deceived by the annexation party, they never would have consented to annex Texas. It has brought a train of calamities along with it, from the effects of which we may never recover. And now, when these calamities are coming fast upon us, when the storm is gathering over our heads, we are told here in Congress—I heard the argument this morning—that we must look carefully to all expenditures from the federal Treasury, that the Administration may have *more* money to carry on the war. Every thing connected with the *home* department of this Government is to be treated with neglect; our rivers are to be unimproved; our harbors unprovided for; the ordinary expenses of the Government retrenched; the resources of the country undeveloped; the industrial pursuits of the people neglected; and every thing that tends to a nation’s wealth and prosperity abandoned, that millions on millions of money may be expended in a war begun and prosecuted under the pretence—to use the language of the gentleman from Maryland—that it was our duty to give *moral* and *religious* institutions to the Mexicans! And what are the moral and religious institutions which gentlemen are so solicitous to give to Mexico? I saw an article in the “Union” of this morning which will, perhaps, throw some light upon the mode we have adopted to reform the *morals* of the Mexican population. It is an order from the civil and military governor of the city of Mexico, as follows:

“OFFICE OF CIVIL AND MILITARY GOVERNOR,
National Palace, Dec. 30, 1847.

“On and after the 1st day of January, 1848, three *gaming-houses* will be licensed and recognised as *lawful* in the city of Mexico. Each one of these will pay in advance a monthly tax of \$500, and all other gaming-houses are positively prohibited.

“After the specified date, all personal property found in any house or place in which public gaming, without license, is detected, and all money and property employed in such unlicensed public gaming-house, will be confiscated, and the persons so detected will be subject to imprisonment for thirty days, and to be fined, according to circumstances, from fifty to two hundred dollars.

“By the Governor:

“R. P. HAMMOND, *Secretary, &c.*”

This is a most admirable device to improve and refine the morals of the people of Mexico! I had always thought that the Democratic party professed an utter abhorrence of monopolies of every kind; but here is such a monopoly as I have never seen before—a monopoly of gambling-shops, authorized by the President of the United States, under the pretence that the money raised thereby is a contribution from the people of Mexico for the support of the army! A most admirable mode is this, indeed, to propagate the doctrines of civil and religious liberty amongst a people whom, as gentlemen tell us, it is our duty to elevate and dignify!

NOTE.—Had I not been prevented, by the operation of the hour rule, it was my purpose to have noticed another position of gentlemen who advocate the course of the Administration.

It is the assertion that the movement of the army from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande was not made until months after the Mexican Government had declared war, and had ordered troops to cross the Rio Grande and advance into Texas.

A few facts, it seems to my mind, will show that this position cannot be maintained, and that Mexico had really made no efficient preparations for war.

General Taylor, in a letter from Corpus Christi on the 20th August, 1845, says:

"Caravans of traders arrive occasionally from the Rio Grande, but bring no news of importance. They represent that there are no regular troops on that river, except at Matamoras, and do not seem to be aware of any preparations for a demonstration on this bank of the river."

In another letter, dated 26th August, 1846, in speaking of the necessity of calling out volunteers from Texas, he says: "*I feel confident, however, that such necessity will not arise.*"

Again, on 6th September, 1845, he writes:

"I have the honor to report that a confidential agent, despatched some days since to Matamoras, has returned, and reports that *no extraordinary preparations are going forward there*; that the garrison does not seem to have been increased, and that our consul is of opinion there will be no declaration of war."

In the same letter he says that the agent reported that "the mass of the people, with whom he mingled, is opposed to a war with us."

In speaking of his force being increased by militia, he says: "*I am entirely confident that none will be required.*"

Again, on 4th October, 1845, he writes:

"Mexico having as yet made no positive declaration of war, or committed any overt act of hostilities, I do not feel at liberty, under my instructions, particularly those of July 8, to make a forward movement to the Rio Grande without authority from the War Department."

On the 7th November, 1845, General Taylor forwarded to Washington a letter to himself from Commodore Conner, dated "*Off Vera Cruz*," October 24, 1845, in which Commodore Conner says:

"No troops (Mexican) have marched towards the frontier for a length of time; and I am told by Mr. Parrott, who left Mexico a few days since, that many of Arista's officers had returned to that city in a state of poverty."

Again, on 19th November, 1845, General Taylor writes—in speaking of a portion of the forces under his command—that "should the *present pacific aspect of our Mexican relations continue*, it will not be necessary to continue this force in service, except possibly one company as guides."

On the 21st March, 1846, while on his march to the Rio Grande, when three miles south of the Arroyo Colorado, General Taylor again writes:

"From the best information I am able to obtain, *the enemy is not in force on this side of the Rio Grande*. A few rancheros are still on the route hence to Matamoras. It is believed that there may be nearly 2,000 troops in that place, but what proportion of regular troops I cannot state with confidence. The arrival of General Ampudia is *expected* from the interior, but the accounts I receive of his movements are quite contradictory."

From this accumulation of evidence from General Taylor himself, it is perfectly certain that he had no such information as is now pretended to be possessed by gentlemen here, in regard to the war movements of Mexico.

But there is still more. *Paredes*, the President of Mexico, published a proclamation, in which he declared that he had *no power to declare war*, that the power to do so was alone given to the "*August Congress*" of Mexico. This proclamation was published in the "*Union*" of May 4th, 1846.

In an editorial article in the same paper of May 5, 1846, it is said:

"Despatches were received yesterday from General Taylor to the 6th of April—several days earlier than other letters which had been previously received from the camp by other sources. *General Ampudia had not arrived at Matamoras at the date of these despatches of the 6th*. There were said to be at that time *not more than 2,000 Mexicans, badly armed and organized*. Our troops felt perfectly secure in their own strength and position. The General had raised a battery on this side of the river, and on the 6th he had mounted the cannon in their places, so as to command the town of Matamoras."

In the same paper, of the same date, there is also published a letter from Vera Cruz, dated 17th April, 1846, in which it is said that—"There is every reason to believe the Mexican Government will carefully abstain from committing any act of hostility against the United States."

We have also evidence of the pacific disposition of Mexico, during the fall of 1845, in the letter

of Isaac D. Marks, our consul at Matamoras, to General Taylor, a copy of which letter was sent to Mr. Buchanan in October, 1845.

He states that he had been informed by General Arista that "the Cabinet of Mexico was disposed to enter into an *amicable* arrangement with the United States in relation to the boundary, and other momentous questions."

Also, that General Arista had "pledged his honor" to him "that no large body of Mexican troops should cross the left bank of the Rio Grande; that only small parties, not to exceed 200 men, should be permitted to go as far as the Arroyo Colorado, (20 leagues from the Rio Grande,) and that they would be *strictly ordered only to prevent Indian depredations and illicit trade.*"

There is also the conversation between General Worth and General Vega, on the 28th of March, 1846, on the Rio Grande. As reported to Congress by the President, with his war message, the following is a portion of it:

"General Worth.—Has Mexico declared war against the United States?

"General Vega.—No.

"General Worth.—Are the two countries still at peace?

"General Vega.—Yes."

It is also evident, from what passed between General Taylor and General Ampudia, after General Taylor reached the Rio Grande, that, if the American troops had *even then* been withdrawn to the Nueces, the war would not have occurred, for the plain reason that, although we had invaded Mexico, she was unwilling to fight us.

On the 12th April, 1846, General Ampudia wrote to General Taylor, requesting him "*to break up his camp, and retire to the other bank of the Nueces river,*" pending negotiations in regard to Texas; and telling him that, if he remained "upon the soil of the department of Tamaulipas, it will certainly result that *arms, and arms alone*, must decide the question."

This array of proof conclusively shows that Mexico was in no condition to make war upon the United States at the time of the march of General Taylor to the Rio Grande; that his march there, by order of the President, so exasperated the Mexican Government as to force it to war without preparation; that the constituted authorities of Mexico had not declared war against us; that there was no effective army on the Rio Grande until after General Taylor reached there; that even after he reached the Rio Grande war might have been avoided if he had returned to the Nueces, which he could not do without disobedience of orders; and that, in whatever aspect the matter can be viewed, the President, of his own will, brought on the war by ordering our army to advance and plant its batteries in the very midst of a Mexican population, who, as General Taylor had written to the Adjutant General, on the 7th January, 1846, were "*in favor of peace.*"

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